

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Final Office Action dated September 29, 2003 and the Interview conducted on December 19, 2003. Claims 1 to 7, 9, 10 and 12 are in the application, of which Claims 1, 7 and 12 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Initially, Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the professional courtesies extended to Applicants' representative during a personal interview conducted on December 19, 2003. Pursuant to the Examiner's indication on the Interview Summary, a summary of the interview is not required, but the following is provided nonetheless.

In the Interview, the Final Office Action dated September 29, 2003 was discussed. Specifically, the Final Office Action maintained the rejection of Claims 1 to 7, 9, 10 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,576,020 (Iritani I) or U.S. Patent No. 5,644,012 (Iritani II). In response to the assertion, set forth in the Amendment dated June 20, 2003, that neither Iritani I nor Iritani II discloses or suggests the crosslinking of molecular chains in a polymer, the Final Office Action, on page 5, alleged that Iritani I discloses that "the polymer is based on polyethylene glycol" and that polyethylene is well-known in the art as a crosslinked polymer. Additionally, the Final Office Action alleged that Iritani I discloses that "polysaccharides are crosslinked with a α or β -1,6 linkage."

However, Applicants disagree with these assertions in the Final Office Action. As discussed at the Interview with support from references on crosslinking and polymers presented at the Interview, polyethylene is not necessarily crosslinked and may be branched as well. In addition, as pointed out by Applicants' representative, although Iritani I discloses polysaccharides that contain a α or β -1,6 linkage, it is not seen to disclose or teach that these polysaccharides are crosslinked. For example, on lines 42 to 45 of column

3, Iritani I lists raffinose as a preferred oligosaccharide in which galactose molecules are linked to a glucose residue of sucrose through a β -1,6 linkage. This β -1,6 linkage itself does not result in crosslinking and there is no crosslinking in raffinose alone.

After the foregoing discussion, which explained how the linking in the Iritani patents is different from "crosslinking" as claimed in the present application, the Examiner agreed that both Iritani I and II do not disclose or teach the crosslinking feature of the present invention.

However, the Examiner indicated that further clarification of the crosslinking feature in the claims is necessary. In this regard, various claim amendments to specify the extent or degree of crosslinking were discussed. However, since a final rejection had been entered, the Examiner indicated that he would refuse to enter such amendments as they would raise issues that would require further search and/or consideration.

Accordingly, a Request For Continued Examination (RCE) has been filed to reopen prosecution on the merits, and independent Claims 1, 7 and 12 have now been amended to clarify the extent of crosslinking in the glycopolymers of the present invention. Support for the amendments may be found throughout the specification, such as at lines 15 to 19 of page 29 in the specification.

In view of the foregoing, early passage to issue is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,
California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to
our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney for Applicants

Registration No. 54,334

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-2200
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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